

# TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WYOMING

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

Biology No. 109

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Subject: MOUNTAIN LION\*

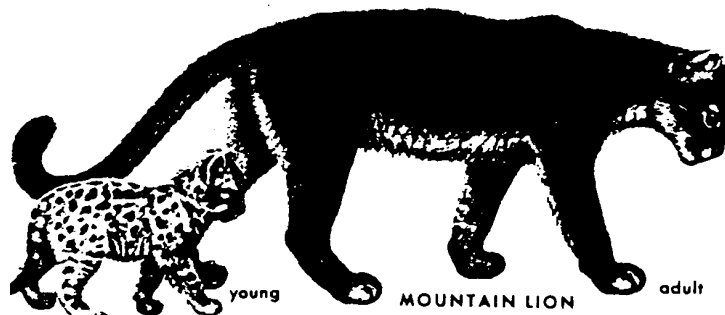
## General

The mountain lion (Felis concolor) has adapted to many vegetative types throughout the western United States. Within Wyoming, rocky canyons and ridges in areas of the Transition and Montane Zones provide favorable habitat. The mountain lion in Colorado is common in the rough canyons and breaks at medium elevations in the mountains.

## Food Requirements

The mountain lion's primary food source in the western United States is the mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus), comprising about 80 percent of the winter diet and 65 percent of the summer diet for most lion populations. In Idaho, one study found that a substantial number of prey deer were over 9 1/2 years or under 1 1/2 years of age or in a poor state of health. Adult male deer are taken in greater proportion than they occur in their populations. It is estimated that a lion kills a deer every 4 to 10 days or an average of one per week during the winter. Another study estimated one deer kill per 3-to 4-week period.

Other important prey animals are elk (Cervus elaphus), porcupine (Erethizon dorsatum), and various small mammals. Domestic livestock depredation is common in some areas. Grass is commonly eaten.



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\*Information taken from Ecoregion M3113 Handbook and Habitat Suitability Index Models, Wildlife Species Narratives (literature searches), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, various dates between 1978-1984.

#### Water Requirements

When water is scarce, the mountain lion apparently is capable of surviving without it for long periods. However, mountain lions are presumed to seek out and return to water sources.

#### Cover Requirements

Cover is used for stalking prey and for rest periods. The mountain lion prefers dense cover or rocky, rugged terrain. In the Rocky Mountains, lion habitat commonly is associated with areas of pinyon pine (Pinus edulis), juniper (Juniperus spp.) mountain mahogany (Cercocarpus spp.), ponderosa pine (Pinus ponderosa), and other brushland. When traversing a valley or meadow, the mountain lion will usually follow a watercourse because of concealment provided by bank vegetation.

#### Reproductive Requirements

The mountain lion seeks additional cover security during parturition and rearing of young. The female will usually seek concealment in a rocky depression, uprooted tree, or dense thicket, with no bedding preparation.

#### Special Habitat Requirements

Generally, any habitat capable of supporting good mule deer populations is usually good mountain lion habitat.

#### Interspersion Requirements

Mountain lions are solitary, unsociable animals that generally avoid contact with other lions. The area of activity for males often overlaps with the females' areas, but usually not with that of other males. The primary factor limiting the density of resident males is the intensity of intolerance for other males within their home range. The usual area of activity for established females is 15 to 31 m<sup>2</sup> (40 to 80 km<sup>2</sup>) and 25 to 35 mi<sup>2</sup> (65 to 90 km<sup>2</sup>) for males.

Mountain lion densities can remain constant even when the number of prey species increases, indicating that other factors regulate their population.

#### Special Considerations

The mountain lion is a game animal within Wyoming. Habitat destruction and human encroachment continue as detrimental influences on mountain lion populations.